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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT-WASIT: WASIT SHAYIKHS DISCUSS SAHWA AL IRAQ

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Wasit reporting cable.

12. (C) On 18 January, ten Shi'a shaykhs from Wasit told PRT and CDR 214 FB that they intend to establish a branch of Sahwa al Iraq (SAI) in Wasit Governorate. The group was led by Shaykh Raheem Bader Abood Al Hatem and included Shaykh Alwan Abd al Rytha al Bandar al Amara, who claimed to be the first cousin of Prince Rabi'yah. (Note. Prince Rabi'yah, directly related to the Jordanian and Saudi royal families, is the leader of the several million strong Rabi'yah Confederation -- a mix of Shia and Sunni tribes. End note.) The shaykhs opened the meeting with a proposal to provide security for Wasit utilizing a force of 5,000 to 6,000 tribesmen overseen by over 150 shaykhs. Beyond describing the force as a "second line" behind the ISF, details were thin on exactly how these tribal forces would combat nefarious militia and Iranian influence. More of a priority to the group than an actual plan to coordinate with ISF was emphasizing their logistical needs, including buildings, weapons permits, agricultural projects, and two IP bodyguards for each of the participating shaykhs.

13. (C) When pressed on an SAI political agenda for Wasit, Shaykh Raheem said he submitted a registration application to the National Government under the official name of "Supporters of Wasit." He said the movement had 20,000 supporters but needed funding. Shaykh Raheem said he was in direct contact with Shaykh Abu Resha and stated three goals of the movement, (1) Security, (2) Democracy and (3) Justice. He did not have a platform or political strategy beyond saying that SAI would "put the right people" in the "right places." He said that Wasit Governor Abd al Latif Turfa had refused three requests to meet with him and two of the shaykhs complained that the head of office for the Wasit Directorate of Tribal Affairs, LTC Falih Hassan Nasir, had threatened them with arrest if they did not recover the SAI application forms distributed to Wasit shaykhs. PRT Team Leader and CDR 214 FB noted that the USG was watching SAI with interest and encouraged the shaykhs to concentrate on political goals and supporting capable, viable leaders willing to assume leadership positions in the Wasit government.

14. (C) On 23 January, Poloffs asked Wasit Iraqi Police (IP) Chief MG Abd Al Haninn about the possibility of the Sahwa al-Iraq (SAI) expanding into the south. Hanin said that the Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of the Interior had forbidden official support to any awakening movements south of Baghdad. Hanin said he personally believed that, if properly organized, the tribes could impact provincial politics. He then backtracked, saying "I,m supposed to stand with my tribe, but in truth the national spirit of the western tribes is stronger than the national spirit in the south." Hanin explained that tribes currently approaching the PRT are not true patriots because they immediately ask for money.

15. (C) Comment. Tribal confidence in providing a robust tribal security force for the Province apparently does not translate into confidence that they can provide security for themselves in their own homes. However, in our judgment, this lack of capability to deliver on the security aspect of the SAI movement does not mean that its potential as a political movement should be ignored. Although there are significant obstacles, and we assess the odds of political success on the Provincial level as fair to low, we will continue to maintain a dialogue with the SAI shaykhs and encourage their interest in working towards better integrating the tribes in the political process. We have not signaled any intention to respond positively to their request for funding, since Maliki and the national leadership have clearly laid down a red line regarding tribal awakenings in the south. End comment.

CROCKER